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ABSTRACT

This report of a year-long writing project that involved over 1,600 junior and senior high school students concludes that students taught by teachers trained in writing as a process showed significant improvement over students of teachers who were not so trained. The report describes the goals and objectives of the New Jersey Writing Project, the personnel involved, the development of the program in three stages (teacher training, implementation and staff development, and assessment), the overall costs of the program, and evidence of the program's effectiveness, including tabular data. (AEA)

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REPORT TO THE JOINT DISSEMINATION REVIEW PANEL

FEBRUARY, 1979

THE NEW JERSEY WRITING PROJECT, A CONSORTIUM PROJECT OF:

Rutgers University
The Educational Testing Service
Nineteen New Jersey Public School Districts

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PROGRAM AREA: Writing, grades 7-12

PROJECT TITLE, LOCATION: THE NEW JERSEY WRITING PROJECT
The Douglass/Cook Writing Center
Douglass Library,
New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903

DEVELOPED BY A CONSORTIUM OF:
Rutgers University
The Educational Testing Service
South Brunswick Public School System
West Windsor-Plainsboro Public School System

SOURCES AND LEVEL OF FUNDING:

1.	NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR HUMANITIES DISSEMINATION GRANT, 1977		
	Personnel	6,000	
	Teacher stipends	2,700	10,000
	Overhead	1,300	
2.	RUTGERS UNIVERSITY, 1977		
	Student fees		
	Parking	3,000	3,000
	Clerical work		
3.	STATE OF NEW JERSEY COMPENSATORY EDUCATION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT GRANT, 1977-78		
	Personnel	19,273	
	Teacher stipends	3,000	
	Overhead	2,137	
	Supplies	8,350	
	Transportation and Consultants	14,700	47,460
4.	LOCAL FUNDING FROM DISTRICTS, 1977-78		
	Substitutes	1,500	
	Materials	1,000	
	Transportation	500	3,000
		TOTAL	$63,460

YEARS OF PROJECT DEVELOPMENT: 1977-78

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT: The New Jersey Writing Project is a state-wide writing program based on a thorough knowledge of the composing process.

Goals and Objectives

The New Jersey Writing Project is committed to the major goal of improving student writing by improving the teaching of writing. This goal is predicated on the following assumptions:

1. Teachers of writing should write
2. Writing is a mode of learning
3. Teachers teaching teachers accomplish efficient curriculum change
4. Theory about and assessment of writing should enhance classroom practices.

The evaluation on which claims of effectiveness are based focused on NJWP's major goal: Students of teachers trained in writing as a process showed statistically significant improvement over students of teachers who did not receive training in writing as a process.

Context and Students Served

The New Jersey Writing Project 1977-78 was a consortium project comprised of Rutgers University, ETS, and nineteen New Jersey school districts (twelve, treatment; seven, control). These demographically disparate districts represented the state's socio-economic cross section: A (lowest), D, E, F, G, H, and J (highest).

The treatment and control district teachers voluntarily participating in NJWP taught approximately 1,600 students. These students were from grades seven through twelve and were enrolled in twenty-five different English curricula offerings.

Program Description

NJWP 1977-78 involved three stages: 1) teacher training; 2) implementation and staff development; 3) assessment.

The teacher training component began with a three week, sixty hour summer institute for twenty-five English teachers from the treatment districts. Each day was divided into a writing/sharing morning session and a presentation/theory afternoon session.

Writing. Teachers wrote for at least one hour every morning; the significance of the writing activity was conveyed by its placement on the schedule. At first writing was free and self-sponsored, activated to initiate the process and keep it going. As the institute progressed, writing was also initiated by other stimuli.

Participants were instructed in reflexive, extensive modes of discourse and were encouraged to experiment with both. Reflexive writing focuses on self; the domain is affective; the style is exploratory. Extensive writing focuses on communicating to others; the domain is cognitive; the style is expository. Therefore, participants wrote in various genres, creating pieces of different lengths, for different purposes, with different audiences in mind. In addition, they recorded in journals their individual responses to the dimensions of the writing process: prewriting, planning, starting, stopping, reformulating. This enabled each writer to examine his or her writing process in a specific way, and to note the processes involved in producing a written product in a general way. So writing became the mode of learning about one's own writing and a mode of learning about the writing of others. Ultimately, each writer regulated his or her writing to the instructor's assignment of two polished pieces of writing at institute's end.

Sharing. During the next hour, participants formed small groups (four to seven people). Each person read his or her piece of writing aloud twice. Peers reacted orally through the use of pointing, summarizing, telling, and showing techniques. They also reacted in writing by testing a variety of criteria sheets and by commenting directly on each other's papers. Peer evaluation moved deductively from general reactions to specific analyses of grammar, style, tone, purpose, syntax, sentence structure, and so forth.

Also, this period allowed participants a time to meet for individual conferences with the institute's instructor. These conferences promoted guidance on work in progress.

After the sharing sessions and conferences, the reformulation phase of the process occurred. The tasks of correcting (eliminating mechanical errors and stylistic infelicities), revising (shifting larger segments of material), and rewriting (completely reformulating a piece or totally scrapping it to begin anew) meaningfully grew out of continual writing practice and sharing, not out of remote rules of placement or displacement or because of cryptic marks on a page.

Presentations/Theory. Each English teacher taught a lesson using a proven writing technique. This was accomplished through simulation with other participants assuming the student role. Then teachers explained their presentations in terms of language and learning theory. Afterwards the theoretical basis of the presentation was analyzed within the context of the writing process. Because of this many discovered firm foundations for methods they intuitively had been using; all learned from these experiences.

References used by the participants included Emig's THE COMPOSING PROCESSES OF TWELFTH GRADERS (1971) which provided the conceptual framework for the institute; Elbow's WRITING WITHOUT TEACHERS (1973) which furnished practical suggestions for composing, sharing, and evaluating; W. Ross Winterowd's CONTEMPORARY RHETORIC (1975) which added the breadth of recent rhetorical research; and Smith, Goodman, and Meredith's LANGUAGE AND THINKING IN SCHOOL (1970) which presented various views on language and thought complete with classroom application, albeit abridged, but workable within the three week time constraint. These and other theories were handled through lectures, interactive dialogues, visiting speakers, handouts, and reprints of selected articles. A bibliography containing such resources as James Moffett's Teaching the Universe of Discourse (1968) and James Britton's Language and Learning (1970), was distributed for future reading and research.

Finally, an anthology consisting of one piece of writing from each participant was compiled and collated. On the last day of the institute everyone received this collection, and a large group "read around" culminated the three weeks. These NEH Fellows then emerged as NJWP's teacher/consultants.

Implementation. The second stage of NJWP was a two-part implementation program. First, returning teacher/consultants introduced writing as a process into their classrooms. While this implementation was done on an individual basis, each teacher generally modeled the institute by following the same ratio of time that had been spent in the institute, writing, sharing, and studying theory in their classrooms. For example, in some classrooms, each student wrote for 15 or 30 minutes two or three times a week; in others, students wrote for 5 or 10 minutes daily. Students began keeping journals. In every case, there was more writing activity going on in the NJWP's classrooms than in other classrooms. Teachers ingeniously incorporated writing into all aspects of their district's English curriculum. Time was also set aside for various kinds of peer evaluation and for teacher conferences. In many cases, students heard and systematically responded to each other's writing for the first time. Also, teacher/consultants wrote with and when their students wrote. By doing this, they were able to help their students understand the theory of writing as a process in a natural and real way.

Second, in addition to implementation in the classroom, teacher/consultants began staff development programs fitted to the unique needs of district curricula. These programs were also modeled on the summer institute even though time and need differed from district to district. For example, some teacher/consultants conducted mini-institute workshops; some instituted semester long

in-service programs complete with in-school credit; still others held awareness sessions for the English faculty, some for the entire faculty. Often teacher/consultants would visit other treatment schools in the consortium, usually in a consultant role. NJWP administrators often participated in some segment of these sessions, and it was not unusual for NJWP administrators to address district administrators. In short, there was a consistent inter- and intra- support system operating among all levels of the consortium, with NJWP providing an administrative support system for its teacher/consultants and for its districts. This continued throughout the entire project development time.

The third stage involved the development and use of assessment instruments and procedures. Here ETS personnel worked closely with members of NJWP. This evaluative phase encompassed the following components: 1) students' writing samples which were obtained in October and May; 2) training for teachers in holistic scoring procedures; 3) teacher and student writing attitude surveys; 4) classroom observation sessions, a dyadic, descriptive type of observation which used a reporting form developed by ETS.

Costs

All costs of NJWP are in installation costs based on twelve participating districts with 1-3 teachers per districts for a total of 25 teachers. Once installed, there are no recurring costs because the program becomes part of the regular district program.

Installation costs are as follows:

Personnel	District coordinator responsible for introduction into the local district.	$300 per district for 12 districts $3,600
Personnel Training	A summer institute for 25 teachers for 60 hours	With college credit $6,750 @ $270 per student or without college credit $3,000-$5,000 for instructors depending on the qualifications of trainees
Materials	Books and reference material for summer participants	$50 per person for 25 people $1,250
Other costs (optional)	Testing Program for baseline and evaluative information	$200 per district for 8 substitutes @ $25 per day $2,400
		$14,950 with college credit

NJWP was based on the premise that a district committed to the improvement of student writing must have within it teachers who are themselves skilled in the writing process and who are willing to serve as advocates among their peers. Thus, the major cost of the program was for an intensive, 60 hour summer course taught by qualified instructors. NJWP has used three patterns to support this training, all or any of which would be available to a dissemination site. The first summer a university professor who was knowledgeable in teaching writing conducted the institute. This person was directly paid out of the project. The second summer the project paid tuition directly to the university and the professor was paid out of those monies. A second institute was also run during the second summer and, in this case, the tuition was paid by the local district. In all these cases, the cost of training was approximately $6,750 for 25 teachers. Only the source of the monies differed from one plan to another.

While college credit is an added incentive to the program, it is not a critical element. NJWP asked the districts to join the consortium, not the teachers and, with or without college credit, over 45 separate requests from districts to send teachers for training were received. If college credit was not a factor, it is likely that the training could be done for $3,000 to $5,000, depending on the qualifications of the instructor.

Minimal additional costs should be anticipated. There should be a small stipend provided for teachers who are responsible for training others back at the school site. In addition to preparation and delivery of in-service work, these people must coordinate and organize the testing program, if the school decides to collect data. While $300 is a nominal amount, it does indicate that the district values the expertise that comes back into the district and wishes to support development in the area of writing. After the first year, the local district can pick up the ongoing development work within its existing organization.

Teachers in the project are taught the processes of holistic scoring both for evaluation and for analysis of student writing. Districts can decide if they wish to gather baseline data on which to build their program. If they do, the costs of reading and analyzing their papers would be about $200 depending on the size of the district. This includes eight readers for one day at a cost of $25 per day for substitutes and would cover the costs of scoring about 1,000 papers.

Finally, approximately $50 per person is needed to provide the summer participants with books and materials for the course. These books serve not only as texts but also as important reference materials for in-service work in the local districts.

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

An evaluation of NJWP was conducted in the 1977-78 academic year. Eight of the original twelve treatment districts and all of the original seven control districts involved in NJWP voluntarily contributed data to this study. One treatment district was dropped from the project prior to fall testing, and two other treatment districts were disqualified because of imcomplete testing. The fourth treatment district, because of modular scheduling, tested uniquely and could not be included.

District participation in the study was based on the State of New Jersey's "district factor grouping" (DFG). DFG is determined by size and socio-economic status of the district. Treatment districts were selected from a pool of volunteering districts. Selection was made to reflect the distribution of DFG in the state. After determination of the treatment districts, control districts were sought that matched the DFG of treatment districts. In return for volunteering to be a control, districts were offered training for their teachers in the NJWP for the following summer. This process resulted in eight treatment districts and seven control districts. English teachers from the fifteen districts were asked to participate in the study and did so on a voluntary basis. All teachers volunteered to participate in summer training and to implement the program in their classrooms. Treatment teachers were trained in the summer of 1977; control teachers were trained in the summer of 1978 (after the completion of the evaluation study). Teachers from treatment and control districts taught approximately 1,600 students.

For the purpose of analysis, fifteen students from each district were chosen at random from all participating students. This sampling was conducted in order to weight each district's contribution equally. Additionally, since the argument can be made that the district should be the unit of observation, the resultant n of 225 strikes a middle ground between the highly conservative n of 15 (using the district as the unit) and the liberal n of 1600 (using all students).

The sample was stratified on sex (with seven or eight males and females from each district). Students ranged from seventh grade through twelfth grade. The sample was not stratified on grade although grade was recorded. The means and standard deviations for DFG (a 0 to 9 scale; 0=low; 9=high) and grade, broken down by type of district, treatment/control and sex are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1.

MEAN SES AND GRADE BY SEX AND DISTRICT TYPE

TYPE OF DISTRICT	SEX	GRADE ($\bar{y}$ / SD)	SES ($\bar{x}$ / SD)	n
	Male	2.80	4.54	52
		1.31	2.44	
CONTROL				
	Female	2.71	4.58	53
		1.32	2.39	
	Male	2.54	4.28	60
		1.39	1.57	
TREATMENT				
	Female	2.43	4.00	60
		1.51	1.52	
TOTAL				
		2.61	4.33	
		1.39	1.99	

It can be seen that the treatment district students were slightly younger and from slightly lower socio-economic conditions (SES, socio-economic status) than control district students, although not significantly so.

All treatment and control district teachers involved in NJWP were requested to pre-test in October, 1977, and post-test in May, 1978, in order to obtain students' writing samples. These writing samples were coded to insure anonymity. The method of assessing the writing samples was holistic scoring. This type of evaluation was developed at ETS and involves trained readers who rate samples from 1 (low) to 4 (high). For the NJWP, the readers were the teachers involved in the study. They were trained by Evans Alloway of ETS and led by four "table leaders" from the College Entrance Examination Board staff. Teachers scored both pre and post writing samples in the same session. Each writing sample was randomly assigned to two raters. The two scores were summed to provide a scale ranging from 2 to 8. Inter-rater reliability was .72.

The simplest way to look at the data is to examine pre-post gain for treatment and control students. These are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2.
PRE AND POST WRITING SAMPLE SCORES

		PRE	POST	DIFFERENCE
CONTROL	$\bar{x}$	4.89	4.69	-.20
(n=105)	SD	1.45	1.29	
TREATMENT	$\bar{x}$	4.64	5.24	+.60
(n=120)	SD	1.65	1.49	

This, however, is an oversimplification and in this instance slightly overestimates the effect of the intervention. A more sophisticated and justifiable approach is a multiple regression analysis, which is presented next.

A multiple regression analysis was computed with the post-writing sample as a dependent variable and (1) pre-writing sample, (2) DFG, (3) sex, and (4) treatment/control type of district as independent variables. The results of this analysis are given in Table 3.

TABLE 3.
REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF WRITING SCORED
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

SOURCE	DF	SS	MS	F	P VALUE	R^2
REGRESSION	5	202.34	40.47	35.08	$\leq$.0001	.44
RESIDUAL	219	252.6	1.15			
TOTAL (corrected)	224	454.96				

COEFFICIENTS

PARAMETER	REGRESSION COEFFICIENT	T	P VALUE	STANDARD ERROR OF COEFFICIENT
WRITING SAMPLE	+ .396	6.67	$\leq$.0001	.059
SEX	-0.068	-0.47	.6401	.145
DFG	-0.059	-1.57	.1182	.038
TREATMENT/ CONTROL	+0.674	4.66	.0001	.145
INTERCEPT	+1.499	4.55	$\leq$.0001	.329

The treatment variable regression coefficient was significant at $p \leq .0001$. The statistical significance of the treatment is clear. Since the treatment was coded =1 and control =0, the coefficient may be interpreted as the direct additional contribution of being a treatment student as opposed to a control student. This effect was .67 points on the holistic scoring scale of 2 to 8. Since

the standard deviation of the post writing sample was 1.43, this represents an effect of 45.5% of the SD of the post writing sample.

An alternative method of assessing the educational impact of the treatment is to compare two students who were average on all independent variables except the treatment/control dichotomy. The average control student would score 4.633 on the post writing sample while the average treatment student would score 5.306, an increase of 14.5%.

The educational import of the intervention seems to be fairly clear and convincing; that the effect is attributable to the intervention is also clear. Although randomization of districts was not possible, the pre-post design makes attribution of effect to treatment the most parsimonious interpretation.

The purpose of the New Jersey Writing Project was to develop a program usable throughout secondary schools with diverse student populations. The evaluation was carried out in seventh through twelfth grades in secondary schools spanning the range of District Factor Groupings (DFG) in the state of New Jersey. Examination of these data on a grade by grade or DFG level is precluded by the design and sample size. Table 3, however, shows little effect of either SES or grade. To conclude, the NJWP is seen to be an effective curricular intervention in the development of writing skills.